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The Contest Closes

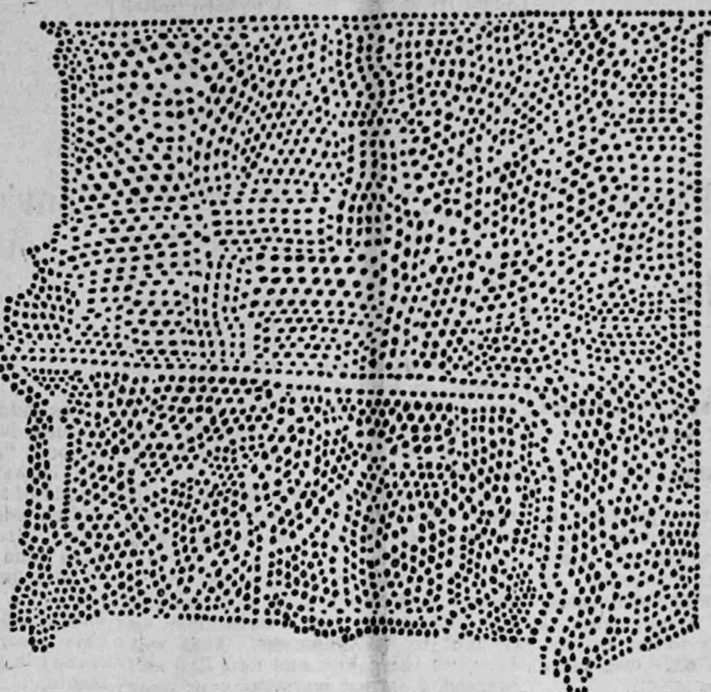
March 31, 1909

The exact number of dots have been placed in a sealed envelope and deposited at the

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It will be opened by the judges at 7:30



Fill out this coupon and send in to
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Total number of dots.....
Name.....
Address.....
A..... R. F. D. No.....

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Every dot can be seen by the naked eye. The person having the correct number receives the first prize—a beautiful Steger and Sons' Piano.

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NOW GET BUSY AND COUNT THE DOTS--YOU HAVE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY WITH THE REST

IF THERE IS ANYTHING YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND, WE WILL GLADLY EXPLAIN. CALL AT THE NEW STORE, 2560 WASHINGTON, OR PHONE BELL 181, INDEPENDENT 39, OR ADDRESS

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LITTLE WILLIE WHITLA RETURNED TO HIS FATHER AT HOLLENDEN HOTEL

Boy Placed on Street Car on Outskirts of City and Started to Hotel—Two Boys Recognize Lad, Take Him in Charge and Conduct Him to His Father—Letter From Kidnapers Told How to Secure Boy Unharmed and "Well Fed"—Woman at Candy Store Detailed Terms

Cleveland, March 22.—Little Willie Whitla, who has caused the police of the entire country endless worry since he was kidnapped from school in Sharon, Pa., last Thursday, was returned to his father at the Hollenden hotel here at 8:30 o'clock this evening. In compliance with an agreement entered into with the kidnaped boy's father and an agent of the kidnapers here today, the boy was placed on a street car on the outskirts

of the city and started to the hotel shortly after 8 o'clock. Two boys, G. W. Ramsey and Edward Mahoney, recognized the lad on the car and, taking him in charge, conducted him to his father, who was in waiting according to a pre-arranged plan, which he had followed at the dictation of the kidnapers. The boy wandered about the hotel lobby unannounced for several minutes, asking bellboys for his father, before the

latter knew his son was in the big foyer. The moment the anxious parent heard that a strange boy was in the hotel, he rushed across the lobby, grasped him in his arms and smothered his face with kisses.

An attempt had been made to disguise the lad. He wore a pair of smoked glasses and a large tan cap, which was pulled down over his eyes and the father said it would have been difficult to have recognized the boy in such a garb had he passed him on the street.

Willie is in perfect health. He says he has been well treated and ever since his capture has been constantly indoors. He believes he was taken from Sharon to Warren and thence to Newcastle, Pa. It is his opinion, expressed in a happy school-boy way, that he was in Ashtabula on Saturday night, at the time his father was to leave his \$10,000 in Flatiron Park.

Whitla, Sr., refused to state whether he had paid the ransom. He said that he received a letter today from the kidnapers at his home in Sharon saying that if he called at a confectionery store in the east end of Cleveland, he would be told how to secure his boy unharmed and "well fed."

Shortly after noon he left Sharon for Cleveland. He was unaccompanied.

His immediate family and private detectives he apprised of the proposed secret meeting, but insisted that he make the trip alone. Everyone of them was warned that he must be allowed to go unheeded and no attempt at the capture of the kidnapers be made.

Whitla was certain that if he spoiled the plans of his son's captors tonight he would never see the boy again. His experience at Ashtabula served as a warning.

About 2 o'clock this afternoon, he went to a candy store in the east end. With him he carried the \$10,000, expecting that it would be demanded of him there. He was met by a woman who detailed to him the terms of the kidnapers. With all the eagerness of a distracted parent, Willie agreed to them immediately. Detectives in his employ said that he paid the money but on this point the father declines to commit himself. Half an hour

later, he returned to the Hollenden hotel and awaited developments.

His entrance to the hotel was shrouded in secrecy. By a previous arrangement made with the hotel management, he did not register. Detective C. V. Perkins, who has supervised the search for the boy in behalf of the father, was in the lobby of the hotel calmly pretending to be unconcerned. The hearts of both parent and detective were beating anxiously. The agent of the kidnapers promised that the boy would be started toward the hotel shortly after midnight. As the hour of the appearance of the child approached, Willie became nervous. He disregarded the advice of the detective, who had told him to keep out of sight of the newspaper men and the crowd of curious people, who had learned that he was in the city. Emerging from his room, he walked up and down the hall on the second floor with hands clasped across his breast. Then, unable to stand the suspense longer, he went into the lobby and seated himself. A few newspaper men walked over to talk to him, but he refused to converse.

"In heaven's name, men, do not say anything to me; I am on the verge of nervous prostration," he said. "I expect the boy will be back tonight, but I cannot state positively whether he will be returned safe and sound. Do not ask me to reveal the settlement. That might ruin all of the plans."

For more than an hour, Willie remained in the lobby smoking cigars and muttering to himself. In the meantime, Willie Whitla, the kidnaped boy, feeling comparatively safe in the hands of his kidnapers, was being prepared for his return to his father. The woman at the candy store had done her duty. She communicated with the captors of the boy and told them that the father had made no attempt to trace them. The kidnapers were satisfied. But Willie, Sr., declines to name the woman in charge of the confectionery and almost dares the police to locate her. So the boy was brought from his hiding place—where it was no one knows—to a car line in the east end of the city, which would bring him into town quickly. The kidnapers, according to Willie, was cheerful enough. The mysterious man and the youngster skipped in school-boy fashion toward the trolley line, jesting in the meantime.

A few rods from the car line the man stopped the boy. Pulling a pair of smoked glasses from his pocket he adjusted them to the boy's head, with the remark, "You'll look better in these."

The slides of the black cap were pulled down carefully over the boy's ears.

A slip, which Willie was to hand to the conductor, was put in the boy's pocket. It read:

"Send this boy to the Hollenden hotel, double-quick."

With all of the arrangements made and his tracks apparently covered, the kidnapers took the boy's right hand in his brawny one and they continued briskly along toward the car line. The

lad skipped gaily enough with his companion, the promise of seeing his "dad" and "ma" urging him forward. They chatted with each other. Willie says the man told him that if anybody asked him who took him to the car line to tell them it was "Mr. Jones."

"Just tell them your name is Jones, too, if you want to," said the kidnapers.

"All right, Mr. Jones," answered Willie.

Presently a car came into view and the mysterious Mr. Jones drew the boy closer to him.

"Well, Willie, you're going down town now and you will see your papa pretty soon," he said.

This delighted Willie. He swung on to the car quickly, according to the conductor.

"Mr. Jones" paid the boy's fare and then got off the car and disappeared, after waving a friendly adieu. This farewell salute was continued until the car had disappeared into the inky darkness of the night.

The boy gazed about the car for a familiar face. He saw no one he knew.

Presently Edward Mahoney, who is a 17-year-old boy of jolly visage, came into the car. He sat down in the seat with the boy. Mahoney, like most every other person in Cleveland last night, was looking for Willie Whitla, the kidnaped boy. So when his eyes lighted on Willie, he started a conversation.

"What's your name," he asked.

"Jones," answered Willie, true to his kidnapers' friend.

But Mahoney was not to be fooled. He called his friend Ramsey over from another part of the car and showed him Willie. He suggested that it might be the missing child.

Then Willie showed them his transfer slip, saying that he would be put off at the Hollenden hotel, and they were soon convinced that they had accomplished more than all the sleuths in the country.

The boys' now willing companions took Willie to the hotel. He skipped through the doors ahead of them and into the lobby. The boys partly lost track of him in the crowd, so anxious was the youngster to catch a glimpse of the face he loved.

Willie did not see his father, or sister in the lobby. Walking over to the clerk he asked:

"Have you seen my papa?"

"Who is he, boy?" he was asked.

"Oh, I'm Mr. Willie's Willie," he replied.

The crowd nearest the boy who heard the words rushed in around him. The lad was shoved up against the hotel counter and the scene closely resembled a panic.

Across the lobby, the father, his eyes red from weeping, heard the pining voice of his son. Frantic with joy at the sound, he rushed through the office corridor and in a moment was fighting his way through the spectators. Plunging and squirming, knocking bystanders right and left, the frenzied parent made his way to the bewildered boy standing solemnly with automobile goggles, in front of the clerk's desk.

The kidnaped boy saw his parent coming. He opened his lips to speak.

The words were never spoken. Grasping Willie in his arms, the happy father lifted the boy into his arms and planted a score of kisses on his lips.

"It's my boy, my darling Willie," he cried. Tears gushed from his eyes. He pressed the child to his breast and hugged him tightly.

Willie smiled a little. He was glad to see his papa, but he did not realize what all the fuss was about.

When the crowd realized that the kidnaped child had been returned to his parent, a cheer rang out. For three minutes the handclapping and shouting continued. There were cheers for the boy and then cheers for the father.

Stripping off the boy's cap and the smoked glasses, Willie revealed his boy's bare head for the first time. He lifted the lad high above his head so that everyone might get a good view of the now famous youngster, who came near to rivaling the "lost Charlie Ross" of kidnaping fame.

As soon as he could push his way through the crowd, Willie went to his room on the second floor. He carried the boy in his arms. For several minutes he was alone in the room with his son. Then through the door came these words, spoken by the father to the boy's mother on the long-distance telephone:

"Oh, mother, I have Willie here in my arms. He is safe. Glory to God, mama, it is the happiest night of my life."

There was a pause. The mother was pleading for her husband to return the boy to his home at once.

"I am sorry, mother," Willie said. "I can't get a train out of here until 8 o'clock in the morning. But I will come home as soon as possible. You can trust me with him, little mother, can't you?"

Detective Reed next answered the telephone. Willie praised him for his work and told him of the recovery of the child. Five minutes after the father had entered his room fully 2,000 persons were gathered in the hallways and lobbies of the hotel. Again and again they called his name and implored his father to bring the boy out and let them look at him.

Whitla acquiesced. Mounting a raised platform in the center of the lobby, he gave everyone an opportunity to see his son. Cries of "Speech" caused Willie to say a few words.

He said:

"If I live a thousand years, I cannot do enough to repay the press, the police and the people who have all done noble work in helping me find my boy and for their sympathy to me, my family and relatives."

When Willie ceased speaking there were demands for a few words from the boy. The lad, for the first time, showed signs of fright.

The boy turned his face upward. He could not speak. The tears, bigger than raindrops, coursed down his cheeks.

Whitla refused to see anyone in his room, until after he had personally thanked the Mahoney and Ramsey boys, who brought Willie to the hotel. He made each of them a substantial gift.

Whitla received the newspaper men later. Willie told his story as best he could.

(Continued on Page Eight.)

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